

national affairs, the inquiry naturally arises as to whether as now constituted it can be entrusted with the management and control of the affairs of the state. I am prepared to show by evidence that is indisputable that its efforts to legislate have been inimical to our people in many instances. The revenue act passed by the last legislature is a long step in the direction of the point towards which the democratic party is rapidly drifting. Many of its provisions are different from any revenue act that has ever been adopted. While many of the objectionable features of the original bill which was introduced early in the session were eliminated, at the same time it contains many provisions that are calculated to cripple the industrial enterprises of the state, as well as oppress the farmers and business men generally. Some of the provisions of the revenue act are of such a character that our state auditor has been compelled to write a letter of apology to the officers of the various corporations doing business in the state. This letter was dated June 25, 1901. Among other things he said:

"This is a novel law for our people, and yet I do not think it is the purpose of the legislature to oppress the corporations by unjust taxes. I am sure it is not the purpose of this department to do anything of the kind. . . . I want you gentlemen to understand that it is the desire of this department to accept the appraisal which you make of your property for taxation as final."

This is indeed a remarkable document, emanating as it does from a state official. When in the history of North Carolina has the legislature enacted a revenue bill which was so odious as to require the auditor of the state, who is a sworn official, to assume the role of apologist for the acts of the legislative branch of the government? Auditor Dixon says: "I do not think it was the purpose of the legislature to oppress the corporations by an unjust tax." He was careful to avoid anything like a positive declaration to the effect that it was not the purpose of the legislature to oppress the corporations by an unjust tax. In order to placate the class of people who have been so unjustly treated by the legislature the auditor says: "I want you gentlemen to understand that it is the desire of this department to accept the appraisal which you make of your property for taxation as final." Just how the auditor reconciles this statement with the following provision contained in section

6 of the revenue act I am unable to say: "Provided that if the auditor and state treasurer, or either of them, is not satisfied with the appraisement and valuation so made and returned, they are hereby authorized and empowered to make a valuation thereof, based upon the facts contained in the report herein required or upon information within their possession and to settle in account of the valuation so made by them for taxes, penalties and interest due the state thereon. . . . . " with the right of appeal given to the corporation in the event that it should be dissatisfied with the rate fixed by the auditor, as therein provided.

The foregoing makes it the plain duty of the auditor and the state treasurer to revise the reports submitted by the different private corporations in the state, and to correct any mistakes that may be made, and to change the valuation fixed by them of the property returned whenever it shall appear to them that an improper valuation has been made, and the statement of the auditor that he would accept as final the report of the corporation with respect to such matters clearly indicates a purpose on his part to disregard and as far as possible tone down the harsh features of an unjust provision of our revenue act. I am informed that a number of business men have left the state since the adoption of the present revenue act rather than comply with the many vexatious provisions which it contains, and that within the past year quite a large number of corporations formed of capital which properly belonged to North Carolina have been forced to go to New Jersey for the purpose of securing articles of incorporation, in consequence of the unjust provisions in our laws with respect to such matters and I have been told since coming to Greensboro that for the same reason several corporations in Guilford county have within the past six months surrendered their charters and obtained charters in the State of New Jersey. The last legislature enacted a statute which undertakes to restrict corporations to the ownership of 300 acres of timber in the event that they should not see fit to operate mills at all times within the state and it also provides that no foreign corporation shall under any consideration be permitted to hold more than three hundred acres of land or the privilege to cut timber from a greater number of acres. This act also provides that any corporation violating its provisions shall for-